

**Parent Council Meeting 4th December 2023, via Zoom**

**Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Amanda O’Donoghue (Chair), Geri Collins (HT), Linda Biggins (Clerk), Katie Ferguson (Pastoral Care), Julie Brown (Treasurer), Jennifer Cassidy, Karen Carruthers, Gill Docherty, Joanne Ferguson, Alison Pearson, Julie Waugh (Maths Teacher), Gail Thomson, Yla Barrie, Mr Haldane

**Apologies:** Jacqueline Docherty, Jill Stevenson, Jigjit Tait Kaur, Charles Gay

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of last meeting 6th November 2023 were approved

**Matters Arising**

Gmail Account – We now have one, well done team.

S1 Parents evening - profile of Parent Council raised, nothing new received into Gmail account.

**Head Teachers Report**

S1 Online Safety Evening 15th November. Although only 5 parents attended, this was a very informative and relevant evening.

S1 Parents Evening on 7th November was very well attended with positive feedback from parents and carers. We had our very own representation from the Parent Council. 146 pupils were represented by a parent or carer which is 61% of the cohort.

S4 Prelims have taken place without incident with most young people arriving on time and on the correct day. This is an encouraging indication for the real SQA exams in May.

S5/6 Prelims will begin after Christmas (15th Jan till 24th Jan) and an updated programme of supported study issued. Please encourage young people to attend.

Photographs have been taken for S1, S4/5/6 today. Information should have already been provided regarding the purchase of photographs.

Ms Crawford has been part of a city-wide programme looking at the justification of the Advanced Higher Hub resource within GCC. Given the huge costs to run they may consider supporting schools across the city to specialise in different subject areas. We are in a fortunate position to offer a number of Advanced Higher options but cannot always justify a class given the tiny numbers. This session only 12 pupils wanted Advanced Higher Computing across the city. I will update you if and when I hear any updates.

Amanda noted that the cost of circa £3k per pupil to attend the hub was expensive, even if a central cost. Who paid for this - indeed it was not the school but the council. Amanda further asked who pays for the College places and are they as expensive, Mrs Collins confirmed the college's are running these courses regardless and the students are basically just filling places. Jennifer asked how many pupils the removal of the hub would affect? Mrs Collins confirmed not many and wherever possible she will try and run advanced highers, and would look to work with Ross Hall, St Paul’s and Kings Park to see what they could do. Hillpark tended to run more AH than the other secondaries close by.

Masterclasses – the programme is just being fine-tuned for pupils working towards 7 x N5s and teachers have requested that a similar programme be put in place for our 5 x H candidates. Master classes will take place out with the normal supported study programme i.e. Saturday mornings and in evenings.

Summer Uniform: The pupil council have met with our uniform provider (Borders) and discussed a few options which include knee length shorts and a clothing item known as skorts. I have asked pupil council to find a way to present options to all pupils and for a decision to be made.

Upcoming dates:

· S5/6 Parents Evening Tuesday 5th December. Linda asked if it was predicted to be as well attended as the S1 night? Mrs Collins advised so far approx 30% but there was still time to reach out to parents and noted they were phoning all who had not responded / booked a place. She was hoping to reach at least 60% attendance.

· Coffee Morning Saturday 8th December. The proceeds from the coffee morning will be going to the school fund - money from ticket sales, stall fees and we also will be selling sweets. Whatever the stallholders make on the day is theirs. Malawi do have stalls but all we will make from them is their table fee. We currently have 10 stalls. Donations from Parent Council for raffles would be most welcome.

· Christmas dinner for pupils will be Thursday 11th December. Mandarin and pineapple cocktail to start followed by Roast Turkey with gravy, chipolata sausage, roast potatoes and carrots or Steak Pie, roast potatoes and Brussels sprouts or Quorn fillet with gravy with roast potatoes and carrots all finished off with a tub of ice cream or a selection of fruit.

· S4 Parents Evening Tuesday 5th December

· Active girls day will be Wednesday 13th December with active boys day Friday 15th December. All activities led by sports ambassadors

· Christmas Concert – December 14th

· S2 Track 2 issued 15th December

· International Dress Day – December 15th

· Christmas Dance – 18th, 19th and 20th December

SQA change of level

In the reporting process, any recommendations to sit Higher from S4 to S5 or from S5 to S6 (also applies to Higher to Advanced Higher) is given based on performance at the time of the report. These recommendations along with estimates provided to the SQA are issued in advance of the final SQA Exam diet and are always provisional until final results are received. The majority of pupils perform as expected or better in the National exams, but unfortunately some receive a worse grade. At the change of timetable in June almost all pupils are given the benefit of the doubt and study work at the highest level possible. This means if a Nat 5 pupil has chosen Higher for S5 then they will study at this level in June and then confirm or change in August. There are some pupils that choose straight way to resit National 5 as they are certain they have not been successful. The recommended entry for all Highers is Grade A / B at N5 but some pupils are keen to attempt Highers with a Nat 5 Grade C. We like to encourage high expectations for all pupils so we let as many pupils as possible continue with Higher with a Grade C and review progress on a regular basis before we all mutually agree on a final level to be examined at the end of S5/S6. National 5 Grade D in Higher would be unusual but it may be a pupil waiting for an Appeal result. This is an individualised process where one size does not fit all. If a pupil is not coping and a level change is possible then the subject teacher / PT would have the original discussion with the pupil and a change of level form would be submitted to the relevant DHT. DHT would check and may speak to pupil to clarify before it is sent to PTPC to send home. Level would only change when a parental signature of agreement is received. We would not normally change a level from Higher to Nat 5 if a pupil had a Grade A or B but would expect pupils to continue with Higher, try all coursework and exams and use this as help should they want to resit. A small amount of changes like this may be made if there are issues of stress brought to our attention. Throughout it is high expectations and a desire to support the pupils as best as we can.

Learning Progression and pathways for young people

· Question - Query re pathways for Children - levels eg NAT 4/5, Higher v Nat 5 and ultimate destinations for kids - is the messaging consistent, how/when is this set, is this steerage made with the child's ultimate aimed destination in mind?

To answer this question, we need to look at previous tracking data leading to learner pathways and then the outcomes of SQA results. We also need to discuss with all department areas their own individual tracking pathways as they can differ slightly. Since Curriculum for Excellence was introduced as parents we must try to consider learning jigsaws as opposed to sequential or linear learning progression. That said, I understand as a parent that this can be confusing particularly if you have a child in S2 about to embark on their option choices. As a school our advice to young people is 1. To consider their career pathway and what subjects are in keeping with this plan, 2. Consider what subjects they enjoy and 3. Consider subjects that they can achieve the highest possible outcome. For the latter, we understand that the potential within a given subject is a big part of making decisions.

If we consider a young person in S3 and their working level in May as being Level 4 Ahead of track, typically this young person would achieve an A or B at National 5 and then an A or B at Higher. That said there have been a number of young people who reach Level 3 On track in S3 May and despite the challenges are still able to achieve at National 5 and Higher. In fact this year in Physics we are presenting an S6 pupil for Higher who was a 1st level learner in S1. The whole school pathways don't take into account subject options, interests, career aspirations, subject difficulty etc so for this reason there will be subject pathways too.

Our pathways must provide guidance but must be flexible as young people mature, regain focus or simply start to appreciate their education at different times within their school career.

When it comes to the senior phase, SQA offer guidance in terms of progression. For example, young people would only be recommended for Higher in S5 if they achieve an A or B in National 5. The same would be advised by SQA from Higher to Advanced Higher.

We are currently working on a Curricular Road Map to offer some clarity around this.

We will continue to work on this as a school and hopefully make the powerpoint live on our website by the end of the session.

Mr Haldane attended the meeting and gave some flavour to the discussion explaining the powerpoint which the parent council have had first sight of (though per above currently incomplete). Mr Haldane explained how the tracking reports worked, however it quickly became clear that this can be confusing for parents (even those on Parent Council) and that perhaps more needed to be done to explain the Levels and also the attainment. It may be a take away that the school needs to do more to explain how this type of reporting works.

Amanda asked if it was possible for the children who were borderline with subjects (ie higher/nat 5) if they had an option of doing both tests? Mrs Collins advised it was possible in Maths/Applied maths as they have different names, but across the board it is not possible.

Jennifer asked about NPA - how do you get offered one? Mrs Collins advised that only PE offers NPA at present, and the school would look at possibly art. However this is a new thing and is still being explored.

Alison confirmed that the set up is very confusing for parents and does not lay out clear pathways - eg at the start of S3 the kids are Nat 4/5 and on BGE level 3/4...so it is hard for parents to understand which level their child is at and what capabilities they have. Karen confirmed after this evening’s discussion she felt she didn't understand the tracking reports.

Overwhelmingly the parents at council agreed the tracking reports were confusing and perhaps needed better explanation for parents going forward. The Powerpoint (to be available later for the whole of school) was helpful at illustrating the potential of the cohorts...and would help to explain where children should track to but at present it was not clear.

**Any Other Business/Parent Questions answered**

Due to the long discussion re tracking reports/pathways - all other parent questions will be carried forward to January meeting.

We have asked for an update on how the coffee morning faired.

**Chair, Correspondence & Treasurer report**

Nothing further this evening, and all correspondence has been issued. Treasurer confirmed that the Bank Account remains as is, and easyfundraising is paid in quarterly.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 8th January 2024, via Zoom